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ABSTRACT

The curriculum guide outline (CGO) developed for the Richland School District One (Columbia, South Carolina) represents a structured effort to coordinate the curriculum across disciplines. The CGO is an outline that guides the total curriculum content of a course and states the level of mastery acceptable for course credit. It has five components in increasing order of specificity and measurability: philosophy, goals, objectives, performance indicators, and test items. From a broad statement of belief (philosophy) to a specific test item that measures mastery of one small element, the CGO provides the total package for curriculum development. The philosophy is a general statement of belief. Course goals are four or five non-measurable statements of content and belief. Objectives state what the student should do and provide the basis by which student output is measured. They focus on achievement. Performance indicators specify exactly what skills students are expected to perform to master an objective. Each minimum performance indicator is linked to at least four test items, three for the interim test and one for the post-test. This approach eliminates the guesswork in deciding if a student has really mastered the course basics. (MSE)

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11 The Ultimate Curriculum Guide Outline:

From Philosophy to Test Items

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The ultimate Curriculum Guide Outline (CGO) is much more than a content outline or a list of teaching activities. It is not a syllabus or the table of contents of the text. Richland School District One in Columbia, South Carolina, in a structured, all-out effort to coordinate the curriculum across disciplines, developed the CGO model. A CGO is an *outline* that *guides* the total *curriculum* content of a course and states the level of mastery that is acceptable for course credit. It has five components:

Philosophy
Goals
Objectives
Performance Indicators
Test Items

Each component is a sub-unit of the preceeding one; each step breaks down the component into a more measurable element to be taught and tested. From a broad statement of belief (the philosophy) to a specific test item that measures mastery of one small element, the ultimate CGO works to provide the total package for curriculum development.

Before embarking on a crusade to write CGO's, consider these points:

(1) Encourage direct input from teachers who will be using the guide, and form from them a committee that you can count on;

(2) Allow yourself a minimum of two years; really three is better;

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(3) Provide for at least one pilot;

(4) Make provisions for a mastery management system and follow through.

Each component will be discussed and examples will be given to illustrate the total package.

Component #1: The Philosophy

The first component, the philosophy, is a genreal statement of belief. It is the core of the total package and should be referenced throughout the curriculum writing process. The philosophy provides the basis on which other elements of the CGO are founded. In the following example note the emphasis on the four basic skills, cultural awareness, and functional ability in the foreign language.

> The foreign language curriculum provides students with an opportunity to acquire an additional tool for communication, to understand other peoples and their differing cultures, to increase their career opportunities, to develop self-expression, and to widen personal interests.
>
> The study of a foreign language is a progressive experience which includes these skills: an increasing ability to understand the language when spoken, to speak it, to write it, and to read it with ease and enjoyment. Also, the study of another language brings about an expanding and deepening knowledge of the people, geography, history, social institutions, literature, and culture of other countries.
>
> Foreign language studies is one part of the school curriculum that prepares students to function in an international society. Knowledge in this area provides students opportunities for interesting areas of work and means by which they can be better equipped to become world citizens.

The philosophy, of course, is not measurable and will never be tested. It merely provides the foundation for the CGO.

Component #2: The Goals

Like the philosophy, the course goals are four or five non-measurable statements of content and belief. Students do not have to achieve goal standards, but goals should be realistic, should reflect the philosophy, and

should set the stage for the objectives to follow. In the following example emphasis is again on functional skills and culture.

1. Students will learn to communicate in the foreign language by developing skills in listening comprehension, speaking reading, and writing.
2. Students will develop through sequential study a degree of foreign language proficiency necessary to function better in an international society.
3. Students will develop an appreciation of cultures other than their own.
4. Students will appreciate the contributions of the foreign culture and language to their own culture and language.
5. Students will develop a positive attitude toward language study.

At this point the CGO committee should study established guides from districts and states that have them, the ACTFL/ETS Proficiency Guidelines, and the texts that will be used. However, a word of caution is needed here. It is so easy to let the text dictate the course, but content and objectives *must* be derived from the professional expertise of the teachers, the CGO committee, and established criteria.

Component #3: The Objective

It is first at the objective stage that the real work seems to begin taking shape. Objectives state what the student *should* do (after all, who can say what someone *will* do?) and provide the basis by which student output is measured. Of the two types of cognitive variables used in education (ability and achievement), curriculum writers should concentrate on achievement objectives.

To avoid writing all objectives at the lowest cognitive level, consider the three types of objectives: informational, conceptual, and procedural. Informational objectives are most familiar to educators. They are facts or generalizations that society believes to be important or interesting in their own right. These include "who, what, when, where" questions, paraphrasing, and making correct inferences based on information presented. (Anderson, 1981)

Conceptual objectives include categories of objects, events, experiences, or ideas that give meaning to symbols, words, and pictures. Students must identify new examples of the concept, eliminate incorrect examples, or identify distinguishing features between or among concepts. The third type, procedural objectives, is a sequence of mental or physical activities that can

be used to solve problems or gather information. To master this type of objective, students must apply a procedure directly.

A sequence of language courses is comprised of 10 to 12 objectives that can be carried over from one level to the next. Here are five objectives for French I-IV. After discussion of Component #4, performance indicators, it will be clear how these five can be used in all four levels of a language.

Objective #2: Students should orally express ideas in French on familiar topics.
Objective #3: Students should exhibit writing skills in French.
Objective #8: Students should comprehend what they read.
Objective #9: Students should comprehend active French vocabulary.
Objective #10: Students should develop an awareness of French culture.

Component #4 Performance Indicators

Performance indicators *indicate* exactly what skills students are expected to *perform* in order to master an objective. They are specific and measurable, and therefore they change in complexity from level to level in language study. In the following examples, the objectives stay the same, but the performance indicators change from French I to French III.

Objective #3: Students should exhibit writing skills in French.
Performance Indicator A: French I
When dictated, write *et, est,* and *a.*
Performance Indicator A: French III
Write a complete original sentence about leisure activities within stated verb objectives.

Objective #9: Students should comprehend active French vocabulary.
Performance Indicator A: French I
Recognize basic colors and answer "De quelle couleur est . . ."
Performance Indicator A: French III
Use these idioms: faire + les courses, la cuisine, la lessive, un voyage.

Since performance indicators detail skills to be performed, each objective may list ten to twenty as subcomponents. Obviously it would be impossible to master each of these, so teachers must decide which performance indicators are minimum and which are not. When a performance is designated as minimum, it is essential that the student master it in order to continue into the next level of that language. If it is not considered essential,

it can be carried over into the next level. For example, you may list ten performance indicators under one objective and then decide on three of these as absolutely essential for level I, three additional ones for level II, two more in level III, and the last two in level IV. By the fourth year the students will have had to master all ten performance indicators of that particular objective to receive credit.

A complete course goes far beyond the minimums. This is the reason other performance indicators are included. Some may never be designated as minimum; they may be viable parts of the course but in actuality a student could speak, read, and write in the language adequately without mastering such a performance. One such example is "Use correct intonation patterns, stress, pitch, liaison, and elision.

One of the biggest questions is what is minimum and what is not. The teacher who preaches the "tour guide" approach will vow that if a student cannot name the rivers of France, he should not receive credit. The truth is that there are probably many Americans who do not know the rivers of the United States yet they seem to be handling English quite well.

Figure 1 illustrates a form to be used by teachers when determining which performance indicators are minimum.

COURSE TITLE _____

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR ASSESSMENT

Objectives/Performance Indicators	(1) At What Other Grade Levels is Objective/P.I. Taught?	(2) How Serious Would It Be If Students Did Not Master this Objective/ P.I. Taught?	(3) How Important is This Objective/P.I. in Terms of the Entire Course?	(4) How many pages in the textbook(s) are devoted to this Objective/P.I.?	(5) How Many Lessons Are typically spent on the teaching of this Objective/P.I.?
Objective # ___	7 8 9 10 11 12	NOT SS S VS	NOT SI I VI		
P.I. A	7 8 9 10 11 12	NOT SS S VS	NOT SI I VI		
P.I. B	7 8 9 10 11 12	NOT SS S VS	NOT SI I VI		
P.I. C	7 8 9 10 11 12	NOT SS S VS	NOT SI I VI		
P.I. D	7 8 9 10 11 12	NOT SS S VS	NOT SI I VI		
P.I. E	7 8 9 10 11 12	NOT SS S VS	NOT SI I VI		
P.I. F	7 8 9 10 11 12	NOT SS S VS	NOT SI I VI		
P.I. G	7 8 9 10 11 12	NOT SS S VS	NOT SI I VI		
P.I. H	7 8 9 10 11 12	NOT SS S VS	NOT SI I VI		
P.I. I	7 8 9 10 11 12	NOT SS S VS	NOT SI I VI		
P.I. J	7 8 9 10 11 12	NOT SS S VS	NOT SI I VI		

Key.--P.I. refers to Performance Indicators. With respect to the seriousness question (Q2), "NOT" means NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT, "SS" means somewhat serious, "S" means serious, and "VS" means very serious. Similar, in question Q3, "NOT" means NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT, "SI" means somewhat important, "I" means important, and "VI" means very important.

FIGURE 1
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For each performance indicator teachers mark in what other grades the objective is taught, the seriousness and importance of the objective, and how many pages and lessons in the text are devoted to this particular objective. What teachers may find is that in reality a performance indicator they had initially marked as minimum may be taught in two previous grade levels and is not so important in terms of the entire course as previously thought.

A performance indicator would be minimum if non-mastery caused misunderstanding in the language. In a pronunciation objective a performance indicator indicating correct pronunciation of *é* and *ç* might be minimum whereas nasals might not be. In addition, these performance indicators are measured in terms of time (180 school days). Once all minimums are added up, the total time required to teach them should not exceed the time available.

Component #5: Test Items

Only those performance indicators designated as minimum will be tested since the test determines who passes and who fails. To determine what evidence you will accept that learning has occurred, you will either look or ask. Vocational teachers often evaluate by looking and use observational checklists while observing the behavior. Checklists can be used by foreign language teachers when testing orally to determine if the criteria are met and to ensure the conversation is kept on task to measure specific objectives.

However, for the most part foreign language testers will ask for mastery through multiple choice tests. Multiple choice items have two parts: a stem and response options. The stem should be a complete sentence, short with no extraneous information and contain some information that relates to the nature or category of the correct answer. The four response options should be plausible and homogeneous and contain elements of the same catefory. Keep in mind the three types of objectives when writing test items. Information items are relatively easy to write; they are "who, what, when, where" questions. Conceptual items include questions such as "Which of the following is an example of. . ?" Procedural objectives state "Find the. . ." and "Judge the. . ."

Each minimum performance indicator should have at least four test items. Three will be used for the interim test distributed with the CGO, and one will be kept secure for use on the post-test. During the second year when the CGO's are being piloted, teachers should pilot the interim items as well to determine if students are having difficulty with the wording or the concept.

TEST ITEM/CHECKLIST CRITIQUE

COURSE: _____
OBJECTIVE: _____
PERFORMANCE INDICATOR: _____

MEASURED BY: (CIRCLE ONE) CHECKLIST MULTIPLE CHOICE ITEMS OTHER

	ITEM QUALITY			CHECKLIST QUALITY		VALIDITY	DIFFICULTY
	STEM CLARITY	RESPONSE OPTIONS WITH PROBLEMS (SPECIFY)	STRUCTURE/ GRAMMAR	COMPLETENESS/ CLARITY			
	Y ? N		Y ? N	Y ? N	Y ? N	(1-3)	(1-5)
PI CKLIST	XXX	XXX	XXX				
PI ITEM 1				XXX	XXX		
PI ITEM 2				XXX	XXX		
PI ITEM 3				XXX	XXX		
PI ITEM 4				XXX	XXX		
PI ITEM 5				XXX	XXX		
PI ITEM 6				XXX	XXX		
PI ITEM 7				XXX	XXX		
PI ITEM 8				XXX	XXX		
PI ITEM 9				XXX	XXX		
PI ITEM 10				XXX	XXX		

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Figure 2

124 Figure 2 is an evaluation sheet for checklists and multiple choice items.

Each of these criteria for multiple choice items must be considered:

(1) *stem clarity*—Upon reading the stem, will the student understand the nature of the response required?

(2) *response options with problems*—Which are implausible or not homogeneous?

(3) *structure/grammar*—Are these acceptable?

(4) *validity*—If a student answers the item correctly, how confident would you be that he has acquired the skill or knowledge specified by the performance indicator?

(5) *difficulty*—How difficult is this item for a minimally competent (D) student?

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There are four criteria for checklist quality:

(1) *Completeness*—Are all the important steps included?

(2) *clarity*—Will an observer know what to look for and how to use the checklist?

(3) *validity and difficulty*—Use the same criteria as for multiple choice items.

Subject matter specialists grade only validity and difficulty while out-of-field educators grade other portions to ensure impartiality.

The ultimate Curriculum Guide Outline is now complete. It contains all five components, has been piloted, and test items have been checked. A management mastery system or monitoring program can be initiated now. Once programmed with objectives, performance indicators, and test items, it will print out for the teacher test items on a particular performance indicator as well as state a percentage that denotes mastery.

Armed with the ultimate Curriculum Guide Outline, you can eliminate the guess work in deciding if a student has really mastered the basics. Gone is the headache about what to teach in a given unit and what to leave out. Gone are the days of a textbook publisher determining your course content. And here are the means by which you can insure that students master the critical skills in your foreign language courses.

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